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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, You are worthy of our praise. Let Your Name be honored on Earth as it is in Heaven. Fill our lawmakers with a spirit of reverence for You and Your purposes. As they seek Your wisdom, direct their steps through the unfolding of Your Divine providence. May no weapon formed against them be able to prosper. Lord, continue to do great things for and through them, causing justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Thank You that we can come to You in weakness and find strength.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

FISCAL AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I said that the Senate would take up the fiscal agreement after the House acted, and we are. This agreement isn't perfect. I share some concerns other colleagues have raised. But here is the bottom line. This is a fully offset agreement that rejects tax hikes, secures long-term savings through entitlement reforms, and provides increased support for our military. All this is at a time when we confront threats in multiple theaters.

Each of these items was a Republican goal heading into the negotiation. Each of these items was achieved in the agreement before us. I am encouraged that it would enact the most significant reform to Social Security since 1983, resulting in \$168 billion in long-term savings. I am encouraged that it would repeal more of ObamaCare. I am encouraged that it would help provide resources our troops so desperately need in an era of diverse and very challenging global threats—when we see ISIL consolidating gains in Iraq and Syria; when we see the forces of Assad marching alongside Iranian soldiers and Hezbollah militias, supported by Russian aircraft overhead.

Colleagues know that I will respect whatever choice they ultimately make when this agreement comes up for a vote. There are valid differences of opinion, and that is OK. But I ask every colleague to also consider what this fully offset agreement would mean for the men and women who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way so that we may live free.

Commanders tell us that additional resources are required—required to ensure their safety and preparedness. This fully offset agreement would help provide them—along with enacting the most significant Social Security reform in over three decades, along with repealing another piece of ObamaCare, and along with refusing to raise taxes

by a penny. I hope Senators will join me in voting for it.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN BOEHNER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, allow me to say a few words about the Speaker of the House. There is a lot you can say about JOHN BOEHNER. He loves his breakfast every morning at Pete's Diner. He is a fan of the tie dimple. He is one of the most genuine guys you will ever, ever meet. I know because we have fought many battles together in the trenches. He never breaks his word. He never buckles in a storm.

What is amazing is how we have had such a frictionless relationship, especially when you consider that old House saying: The other party—that is just the opposition. But the Senate—that is the enemy.

That may have been true of past House and Senate leaders, but it wasn't true for us. Though you might not expect it, I am a little more Bourbon and JOHN is a little more Merlot. I lecture on Henry Clay. John sings "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah." But I have always considered JOHN an ally. I have always considered JOHN a friend. It is hard not to like him, and it is hard not to admire what John has accomplished in his career.

As a concerned Ohioan, he took on a scandal-plagued incumbent in a primary and won. As a freshman Congressman, he took on money laundering schemes and banking scandals involving powerful Members and prevailed. As an engineer of the Contract with America, he took on Democrats' decades-long power lock and triumphed.

As an ex-member of leadership once considered politically dead, he knew he had more to offer and convinced his colleagues that he did. As the inheritor of a diminished and dispirited House minority, he dared to believe conservatives could rise again and help grow the largest Republican majority since

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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